

The Larches

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Michael Best

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.^{1,2}

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

The Larches School is a small independent special school located on two sites in Leominster. The school opened in March 1996. It is registered for 20 pupils aged between 11 and 16 years. Currently there are 17 pupils on roll and two more are about to join the school. All have severe emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and some also have moderate learning difficulties. All of the pupils are White British and most have a statement of special educational needs. Most are looked after by various local authorities in England and Wales: they are either resident in a number of children's homes run by the proprietors or in foster care placements. All pupils have had a disrupted education which has adversely affected their attainment and self-esteem. The school aims 'to be a place in which pupils are given opportunities to become confident learners in a caring environment, where they are supported and encouraged to achieve personal success both now and in the future. The Larches values all individuals attending and celebrates learning.' The present headteacher joined the school in September 2010.

Context of the inspection

The school was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2009. Not all the requirements were met. Following this the school drew up and submitted an action plan to address the outstanding requirements: this was evaluated and accepted in April 2010. A monitoring visit to check the progress the school had made in implementing its action plan took place in November 2010: this found that all but two of the outstanding regulations were met. The school submitted a further action plan in January 2011 which was accepted in February 2011. This second monitoring visit was made to check the progress the school has made in implementing its most recent action plan.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

When the school was inspected in December 2009, there were no schemes of work for music, citizenship, information and communication technology (ICT) or modern

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

foreign languages. The school's first action plan proposed that these schemes would be completed by September 2010. The progress monitoring visit in November 2010 found that while these subjects were being taught on a regular basis, comprehensive schemes of work were still not in place and the requirements were not met.

At the time of the monitoring visit in November 2010, a rudimentary scheme of work for ICT, based on nationally available plans, was in place and was being implemented. The school's second action plan outlined its proposals for developing full schemes and plans. This work has been successfully completed and the schemes and plans that are now being implemented that are well matched to pupils' needs and interests. In particular, the school has also developed and implemented a functional skills policy that supports pupils' application of ICT skills across the curriculum and leads to an external award. The school has invested substantially in multimedia equipment in classrooms and staff have undertaken in-service training in making the best use of this to support teaching and learning.

In November 2010, the scheme of work for French was very basic and, although it drew upon commercially available units of work, it had yet to be customised to the needs and aptitudes of pupils at the school. The school outlined its proposals to develop a scheme of work and plans for French at Key Stage 3 in its second action plan, submitted in January 2011. This present progress monitoring visit found that the school has successfully completed and implemented its latest action plan. Both the policy and scheme of work reflect pupils' needs and interests, building systematically on prior learning and experiences, and linking effectively with the school's provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship.

Although music was being taught alongside drama at the time of the second progress monitoring visit in November 2010, the school's scheme of work for music was not adequate to inform planning. Following a change in staffing, the school has developed and is successfully implementing a performing arts course, leading to an externally validated qualification at the end of Key Stage 4. Encompassing music, art and drama this course has been recently validated by the awarding body, BTEC. The school's well-focused policy is supported by schemes and plans which include clear assessment procedures.

The inspection in December 2009 found that, although there was evidence of citizenship elements in personal, social and health education schemes and in other curricular areas such as English, there was no overarching scheme of work for citizenship. As a result, the school did not ensure that pupils were provided with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England. The school's second action plan, outlining its proposals to address these shortcomings, has been successfully implemented. This second progress monitoring visit found that the school has drawn up and implemented comprehensive schemes of work and plans for pupils at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in citizenship. These incorporate good links with other subjects and the provision made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Samples of work seen during the visit indicate that pupils are benefiting from this provision, particularly the links to national and global events.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school has made good progress and now meets all regulatory requirements.

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for pupils with severe emotional, social and behavioural difficulties		
Date school opened	March 1996		
Age range of pupils	11–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 9	Girls: 8	Total: 17
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 9	Girls: 3	Total: 12
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 8	Girls: 8	Total: 16
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,200		
Address of school	The Larches Coningsby Road Leominster HR6 8LL		
Telephone number	0845 6182684		
Email address	thelarches@clifford-house.co.uk		
Headteacher	Helen Fox		
Proprietors	Nicklas Nenadich, John Brierley, Linda Gresty		